

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



Enclosure 2c
May 3, 2012

Work Session

RIDE

**Thursday, April 19, 2012
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

MINUTES

Attending: George Caruolo (Chairman), Carolina Bernal, Colleen Callahan, Robert Carothers, Patrick Guida, Karin Forbes, Mat Santos (joined the meeting in progress), Betsy Shimberg

Absent: Lorne Adrain

The meeting convened at 11:44 a.m.

Chairman Caruolo welcomed everyone, acknowledged that the meeting was a Work Session of the Board of Regents duly noticed, that Commissioner Gist would not be attending the day's meeting, and that Deputy Commissioner, David Abbott, would be fulfilling her role. The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Approval of Agenda

On a motion duly made by Regent Guida and seconded by Regent Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education accept the day's agenda.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, B. Shimberg

NAYS: 0

Commissioner's Report

Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools - School Improvement Grants

Deputy Abbott reported that the previous day RIDE released the names of the Persistently Lowest Achieving schools from Cohort 2 that will be receiving the next round of School Improvement Grants:

- Charles E. Shea Senior High School, Pawtucket
- William E. Tolman Senior High School, Pawtucket
- Mt. Pleasant High School, Providence
- Pleasant View Elementary School, Providence
- Providence UP Schools
 - o Carl G. Lauro Elementary School
 - o Gilbert Stuart Middle School
 - o Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School

Three of the five Providence schools (Carl Lauro, Gilbert Stuart, and Dr. Jorge Alvarez) chose the Restart Model, under the very innovative labor-management compact, while the other two (Mt. Pleasant and Pleasant View), as well as the two Pawtucket high schools (Shea and Tolman), chose the Transformation Model.

RIDE staff reviewed the reform plans that the schools submitted; through a competitive-grant process, the schools were awarded SIG grants based on the quality of their plans.

National Report Praises R.I. Commitment to Pre-K Programs

Deputy Abbott noted that RIDE is pleased to report that the report from the National Institute for Early Education Research, "The State Preschool 2011," praises R.I. as one of only five states to achieve all 10 of the Institute's benchmarks for quality standards.

R.I. is certainly committed to wisely using the \$50 million it was granted in the RTTT Early Learning Challenge to improve the quality of early-learning programs and to prepare our young children for success in school.

Central Falls - Commissioner's Order

Deputy Abbott shared with the BOR the Order that Commissioner Gist issued to Central Falls the previous evening as the result of a decision made by Governor Chafee not to appeal, but rather to embrace, Judge Bailey's and the Bankruptcy Court's ruling that the Central Falls School District is not part of the City of Central Falls.

Instead, the Governor wrote to the Commissioner and Chairman Caruolo urging RIDE and the BOR to exert whatever state authority they have to take control of the finances of the district, of the contracts, and of collective bargaining.

The Order exercises the Commissioner's authority under state law to reserve certain duties and authorities from the Board of Trustees, placing the Commissioner in the place of the Board of Trustees in certain critical areas related to the financial system, preparation of the budget, collective bargaining, and entering into all contracts. It will mean approving all expenditures and also reserving the right to oversee any policies.

The Order, which is designed to be temporary, will primarily be in place to bring some stability to the financial situation in Central Falls, including managing contracts and collective-bargaining procedures. It is limited in certain respects, as there will still be a Board of Trustees, which will continue to have a lot of its authorities in its day-to-day oversight. The order will also not directly affect the superintendent's role.

Chairman Caruolo shared the letter from the Governor, and without being overly specific prior to meeting with Central Falls, he reiterated that the Order is a move to temporarily go into Central Falls and to work with the district to perpetuate whatever stability is there right now and get done what needs to be done, in what is in some regards a vacuum. The Judge's decision has in some regards brought to the fore some of the ambiguities of the past. There have been at least two iterations of statutory development as to where the duties and responsibilities lie. The State of R.I. has been paying the Central Falls bills since 1991, in what was at the time meant to be a temporary situation and has turned out to become a funding fatigue. There is a renewed legislative focus on exactly what the structure is to be in Central Falls. The process will end with the legislature making some determination as to how this should work going forward.

Chairman Caruolo said that it is the Governor's feeling that the steps that have been taken (the Governor's letter and Commissioner's Order) are necessary to stabilize the situation and keep it moving in the right direction. There are some very positive things taking place in Central Falls over the last several years, and there is a real desire on part of the Governor not to lose the momentum that will either make the children the beneficiaries or the victim, if that momentum does not continue.

Chairman Caruolo said that RIDE will be working closely with the superintendent and the Board of Trustees, and the matter will continue to be a topic of conversation for the BOR going forward, pretty much on a regular basis. The Regents will need to have their views made known at different points. Although a lot of the decisions will be made at a different level, the Governor's office and the legislature will at some point want to know what the Regents think and what assistance and input they can provide.

ESEA Waiver

Deputy Abbott reported that RIDE had its peer-review conversation and received a 52-page critique from the peer reviewers and, fortunately for RIDE, the U.S. Department of Education changed the process from Round One. Simultaneous with receiving the peer review, RIDE also received a letter from the assistant secretary for ESEA clarifying what are the high-point interests of the Department; this letter was a page a third.

RIDE has a check-in call with the Department this afternoon, and we are very confident that we will be submitting an amended application by the middle of next week.

Regional Meetings on Educator Evaluations

Deputy Abbott reported that, as RIDE moves forward to next year's full implementation of educator evaluations across the state, we continue to gather feedback and guidance from educators in the field.

Our goal is to learn as much as possible from the experiences of the current "gradual implementation" year as well as from Jamestown and Warwick, which went through full implementation this year.

WE want to streamline the process next year while ensuring that evaluations are fair, accurate, rigorous, and meaningful.

We are scheduled to hold the last two of a series of regional forums, as we continue to gather feedback and guidance from educators in the field.

RIDE Going Live with Version 2.0 of Infoworks

Deputy Abbott reported that RIDE is really excited to be going live with "version 2.0" of Infoworks.

The redesigned site is easier to navigate, it includes clearer and richer charts and graphs, and it now has a page dedicated to examining statewide data.

There is a searchable data dictionary so that the public can better understand the various initiatives ongoing in Rhode Island schools, as well as sortable Uniform Chart of Accounts tables – including both district-level comparisons and state-level detail. The site also includes all of the most up-to-date information on schools and districts.

Woonsocket

Deputy Abbott report that last week, upon receiving notice from three special education service providers alerting the Woonsocket School Department and RIDE that they were about to cut off services to students with IEPs because of unpaid balances for services provided to these students, RIDE held a "show cause" hearing to determine the necessity of an order under R.I.G.L. 15-5-30 from the Commissioner to the General Treasurer to withhold payments of a portion of state education aid that has been or may be apportioned to the City of Woonsocket for the months of April, May, and June, and pay such funds to RIDE so that IEP services to certain disabled Woonsocket students will not be discontinued.

The special education service providers shall submit invoices to our Office of Finance and shall reflect the current monthly charges for services provided to Woonsocket students.

Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Caruolo deferred additional Chairman's Remarks.

Discussion Items

Virtual Learning – Draft Regulations

Over the last few meetings, RIDE and the Regents have had fruitful discussions on the topic of Virtual Learning and the development and adoption of regulations on Virtual Learning in R.I.

The goal of these regulations is to ensure that virtual learning, digital learning, and blended learning in R.I. are of high quality, promote flexibility, and broaden educational opportunities for all students.

RIDE recently issued an RFP for the Innovation Powered by Technology grant, which will enable a school to transform itself through the use of technology.

RIDE expects 20-plus schools to apply and will be announcing the winning school at a news conference, probably on May 8th.

The winning school should become a “proof point” that will provide ideas and inspiration for other schools across the state that are embracing technology as a tool for changing the traditional classroom and the school day.

Andrea Castañeda and Holly Walsh went over the draft regulations and answered questions on the specifics regarding content and alignment with state standards, whether online virtual courses will meet the state-mandated high-school graduation requirements, whether virtual charter schools need to be state-approved like any other charter public school, whether Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) will reflect when students avail themselves of virtual learning opportunities, and regarding the need to ensure that the regulations have clear language as to the district’s responsibility to provide teachers supports for training and professional development.

Charter School Renewals

Three charter public schools (Blackstone Academy, The Compass School, and the New England Laborers’ / Cranston Public Schools Career and Construction Academy Charter School [NELS]) are up for renewal, each with charters that expire at the end of the current academic year.

Each charter is different, both in design and in history of performance over the past charter term.

RIDE is recommending five-year renewals to the Compass Charter School and Blackstone Academy Charter School.

Compass has performed solidly during their entire charter term.

Blackstone is on a solid trajectory of improvement and has made impressive gains, especially in mathematics.

RIDE is recommending a three-year renewal for NELS.

The three-year renewal recommendation reflects the fact that NELs, along with the other two charters, was among the first to go through the new RIDE renewal process, so there are some issues about the school not being on notice of the expectations; because the new renewal process is not in effect, this year will mark the last time that a school has had insufficient notice of expectations.

Despite the historically low levels of student achievement at NELS, it is important to ensure that the renewal recommendation takes into account the newness of the renewal process.

NELS has been proactively engaged in school improvement since receiving its visit report last year, and NELS has hired a new principal; the school also has a new curriculum and program design.

RIDE believes that a three-year renewal is a very fair and reasonable renewal recommendation.

RIDE will be request BOR approval of all three renewals at the May 3, 2012, BOR meeting.

On a motion duly made by Regent Shimberg and seconded by Regent Bernal, it was

VOTED:	That	the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting.
	Vote:	8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:
	YEAS:	G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, P. Guida, B. Shimberg, M. Santos
	NAYS:	0.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.